

New Hampshire Special Education On-site Evaluation Report

SPAULDING YOUTH CENTER

Program Directors

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Final Report

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Evaluation Conducted on: April 5 & 6, 2001

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New Hampshire Special Education Program Evaluation Report

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Note: It should be noted that suggestions are not considered corrective actions and therefore are given as technical assistance. The private facility is not mandated to implement them.

New Hampshire Special Education Program Approval Summary Evaluation Report

Facility

I. INTRODUCTION:

A New Hampshire Special Education Program Approval visit was conducted at the Spaulding Youth Center. The program approval team met on April 5 and 6, 2001, in order to review the status of Special Education services provided to eligible students.

Activities related to this evaluation included the close review of all application materials submitted by the school and a check of teaching certifications of special education personnel. In addition, interviews were held with the Program Directors, special education teachers, regular education teachers, counselors, parents, paraeducators and related service personnel as availability permitted. The team also randomly inspected and reviewed student files from the school, including the files of students who fall under the James O. Consent Decree. Throughout the visit the team had full cooperation from the school personnel, which was greatly appreciated.

The report that you are about to read represents the consensus of all visiting team members. Please keep in mind that this is a "report for exception", meaning that only exceptions to the NH State Standards have been addressed. If a component is not mentioned, that does not mean that the team did not review it; it just means that there were no exceptions to the Standards found in that particular area.

II. STATUS OF PREVIOUS ON-SITE: *October 21 and 22, 1997*

Based on a review of the previous program approval report and the findings of the team visiting on April 5 and 6, 2001, it was the consensus that staff at Spaulding Youth Center have made a genuine attempt to rectify the citations from the previous program approval visit and continue to work toward improvement. There are, however, issues that continue to require corrective action.

Of importance is the general trend toward improved access to technology for students and staff at Spaulding Youth Center. The Pangburn Program has a computer lab available for students and has acquired some relevant software. The Neurobehavioral Program has replaced out-of-date computers in the younger student's program. Technology for use by students or staff to improve instruction and communication has not been updated in the adolescent program. All programs need to continue to explore and invest in technology that can best be utilized in instructional practice and in software that would provide increased student access to the curriculum. The team recognizes that the Spaulding Youth Center has an approved long-range technology plan, yet due to program growth the plan should be reviewed is current and is meeting the needs of all educational programs. Of note, the team strongly recommends that a critical look be given to access of technology to students & staff of the Neurobehavioral Program.

Instructional staff in the Neurobehavioral Program did not receive training in NHEIAP / Alternate assessment techniques early enough in the school year to allow for students to participate in this year's assessments.

Curriculum development has taken place at the Pangburn School since the last visit, particularly in the area of mathematics. However, curriculum design and development is an ongoing process and continued work is necessary in other content areas.

A the previous visit, no related service professionals in the areas of speech/language pathology, occupational therapy and physical therapy were on staff. This situation remains unchanged. The significant and diverse needs of Spaulding Youth Center students indicate that support through an integrated approach of related services should be a critical part of programming. This issue was clearly identified three years ago and has not been resolved.

Student records show that work has been done to update procedures and forms related to the special education process. The revised IEP format used by the Pangburn School is comprehensive and assures that necessary components are included in the students programs and the decision making process. However, the Neurobehavioral Program utilizes a separate IEP format, which does not include all necessary components. The student records continue to be a compilation of clinical and educational work and are stored in a building separate from the educational programs. This precludes educators and therapists from easy access to information they would require for IEP development and the evaluation processes. Teachers indicate that they do keep copies of IEP's in the school for access and use.

A significant issue identified during the previous visit that also continues today, is the very separate educational systems within Spaulding Youth Center. The Pangburn School and the Neurobehavioral Programs function independently of each other. There is little evidence of shared resources, knowledge or information. Having such separate systems within a small center results in duplication of effort and resources, an inconsistency of practice, a lack of clear communication, and a distinct lack of a "learning community" culture. Staff interviewed during this visit consistently described a sense of separateness and a lack of knowledge about each other's programs.

The school programs have experienced a relatively high rate of staff turnover in recent years and have worked hard to continue to recruit and train new, certified staff. This issue is a common theme in education today, particularly in small, year round, private school settings where it is difficult to compete with local public school systems for a small pool of certified staff. Spaulding Youth Center has demonstrated a concerted effort to seek and maintain qualified staff, and while several staff are not fully certified, the staffing pattern has improved since the last visit.

III. ISSUES OF SIGNIFICANCE:

The visiting team found the staff and administration of the Spaulding Youth Center to be dedicated and caring professionals. The parents interviewed expressed satisfaction with the programming.

A number of issues require attention and resolution, with some of these issues previously identified and continue to be a concern.

While present staff are working hard and care about their students, there are several factors that would greatly improve the quality of services to students at Spaulding Youth Center. The lack of a formalized, regular system of related services in the areas of speech/language, occupational therapy and physical therapy, provided to students in any of the programs was identified as a shortcoming. This issue was identified three years ago and has not been addressed by administration in any conclusive manner. The students placed at Spaulding Youth Center represent students who are unable to succeed in a less restrictive setting and therefore require additional, and often times, extensive therapeutic and academic supports. The need to provide students with a well developed array of related services is clear. Students with autism, speech/language disabilities, severe learning disabilities, mental retardation and related disabilities, struggle with all aspects of communication and often present with a variety of other cognitive and motor needs. The lack of support in this area needs to be addressed.

Professional development opportunities for all staff should be ongoing and based on current best practices and clearly related to their instructional and therapeutic practice. Although the team recognizes that

Spaulding Youth Center provides reimbursement for college courses leading to special education certification, this course work tends to be isolated and not directly linked to best practice or Spaulding Youth Center's Professional Development Master Plan. Future emphasis for all professional development activities should be designed and directly linked to the goals outlined in the master plan. A system of clear and consistent communication among all staff would greatly improve the understanding of student needs and the educational efforts being made. Regularly scheduled staff meetings to share information, provide opportunities for problem solving and goal setting, and to enjoy the sense of community that comes from teamwork would provide a new level of support to staff and ultimately to students.

The Spaulding Youth Center is divided into two basic school programs, the Pangburn School and the Neurobehavioral Program (which is further divided into two programs; younger age children based on the main campus, and young adults based downtown at the storefront program). The visiting team was struck by the sense of separateness that presently exists between these programs. The previous team also identified the separate systems as being limiting to the overall effectiveness of programming. During that visit, team members were assured that a new leadership model was underway and the previous report indicates that administrative staff reported a "restructuring of the presently encapsulated" program would occur. The programs do not presently share any real resources. For example, the physical education instructor works with only one program, while the other program has no physical education teacher. There are numerous potential benefits to restructuring the educational program and considering the addition of a single Education Director to ensure consistency in policies, procedures, professional development, staff and program supervision and evaluation, instruction, student assessment, goal setting, transition planning, therapies, materials, equipment, assistive technology, etc.

The visiting team also raised the issue of behavior management techniques and procedures. There are different behavior management processes in place in the programs. Within the Pangburn School, the students from the Cutter Wiggins residence are provided with a process called "One, Two, Three, Magic", while the other ED students are provided a separate behavior management system. The students in the Pangburn School Program are presently placed in locked processing rooms when a time-out is necessary. The students can remain in the rooms for periods of hours or, in rare cases, up to several days and nights. This is an extreme behavior management technique for students with disabilities and the team strongly suggests that such practices be discontinued. All time-out periods must be recorded and carefully reviewed to determine whether students are being provided the educational opportunities to which they are entitled. The visiting team agreed that students should never be deprived of basic needs and rights and the placement in a bare, locked small room for any period of time is unacceptable. Staff should immediately review and revise the behavior management policies and techniques. Consultation from experts in child behavior management may assist staff in revising the present process and moving to a less isolating and punitive form of behavior management to a more effective philosophy and approach to behavior management.

Finally, the instructional spaces used throughout Spaulding Youth Center should be reevaluated to determine if classrooms provide appropriate learning environments. The visiting team recommended construction of walls within the Pangburn School so that classrooms would have less distraction and lower noise levels. The area provided to the Pangburn students is also at capacity and should be reviewed prior to adding any more students to the present space. The entire facility needs to be reviewed to ensure that classrooms meet instructional space requirements in accordance with Ed. 306.06. The learning environment for students needs to be properly designed for the teaching of all academics, as well as art, music, etc. The Neurobehavioral program's storefront facility, which houses the program for the older student group should be significantly refurbished or relocated. Administration should work to ensure that the learning environments for all Spaulding Youth Center students is appropriate and of a high quality.

IV. COMMENDATIONS, CITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS:

PROGRAM: Emotional Disability Program (Pangburn School)

COMENDATIONS:

- The staff work well as a team, are enthusiastic and communicate well.
- The new IEP format is readable and comprehensive.
- Student records include key components.
- Parents are pleased with the communication from school to home.
- Technology has improved quite a bit since the last visit. The addition of the computer lab, the Alpha Smarts word processors, and technology consultant are all commended.
- Curriculum design in the area of mathematics is commended.
- The administration has worked hard to ensure that the ED program is in compliance and current with state and federal regulations.
- Staff are offered course reimbursement to further their education and to complete certification requirements.

CITATIONS:

Ed. 1133.07 CHILD MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

A private facility shall not employ any measure which is aversive or depriving in nature or which subjects a child with a disability enrolled in that program to humiliation or unsupervised confinement...as defined in RSA 169-C, The Child Protection Act, or which deprives the child, even temporarily, of basic necessities such as communication or contact with family. The visiting team expressed concern at the locked processing rooms and the length of time students may be placed in these rooms (several hours typically, but potentially up to several days and nights), as well as the expectations that students are not able to return to programming and residential life until they demonstrate compliance by facing the wall and not speaking for a period of time.

Ed. 1119.07 QUALIFICATION OF SERVICE PROVIDERS

Consultation with individuals certified in all required content areas must be established. At the time of the visit no library/media specialist was on staff, however this position has been filled since the visit and credentials submitted for review.

Ed. 1109.07

Ed. 1133.05(e)(k) PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS/IMPLEMENTATION OF IEP

Students are not receiving occupational therapy services that are stipulated on their present IEP. Each private facility shall implement all components of each student's IEP providing all special education and educationally related services in the amount and for the duration so specified in the IEP. Duly licensed or certified instruction, support and related services personnel shall be provided by each private facility.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Reorganize student educational records so that information relevant to the IEP and the design of student programs is easily located and accessible to teaching and related service staff.
- Increase the size of instructional spaces. Construct walls to separate learning spaces and decrease distractibility and noise levels.

PROGRAM: Emotional Disability Program (Pangburn School), Continued

SUGGESTIONS:

- Create regular and formalized meeting times for all staff to share information, plan program improvements, share instructional strategies and collaborate.
- Consider the addition of educational assistants for the ED classrooms to assist in instruction, particularly with modifications and develop clear job descriptions for that role.
- Embed the initial staff training into the actual work, along with separate training sessions, so that orientation, mentoring, supervision and feedback on performance can begin as soon as possible.
- Encourage staff to visit other educational programs (private and public school) to observe different models of instruction and behavior management.

IV. COMMENDATIONS, CITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS:

Program: Neurobehavioral Program

COMMENDATIONS:

- Discussions with teachers and assistants indicate they are very dedicated and committed to students.
- Parents interviewed indicate good communication between the Neurobehavioral Program and home.
- Interviews revealed that communication between the Neurobehavioral Program and residential staff is good.
- The staff to student ratio in the Neurobehavioral Program appears effective.
- There has been an improvement in the acquisition of materials, equipment and technology available to the younger students in the Neurobehavioral Program.
- The curriculum and instruction offered to the younger students has shown improvement since the last program approval visit.

CITATIONS:

Ed. 1109.01 IEP COMPONENTS

CFR300.347(a)(4)(5)i, ii (a),

CFR300.346(c)

CFR300.347(b)(1)(2)(a)(3)ii,iii,iv,v,

CFR300.344(b)(2)(3)ii

Student IEP's did not include a transition statement with all of the required components; statements related to state-wide or district-wide assessments, necessary accommodations necessary and results; measurable annual goals with benchmarks or objectives; an explanation of how the disability affects involvement and progress in the general curriculum; an explanation of the extent to which the child will not participate with non-disabled children in regular classes; the length of school year; special factors statement; transfer of rights statement; and consideration of most recent evaluation results.

Ed. 1111.01 EXTENDED SCHOOL YEAR

There was no evidence that Extended School Year was considered. A letter was sent to sending districts with recommendations, but was not part of team decision.

CFR300.504(a)(2) PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS

There was a lack of evidence that parents are sent Procedural Safeguards with each notice of an IEP meeting.

Ed. 1119.04 EQUIPMENT, MATERIALS AND ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Students in the Workshop Storefront Program lack sufficient instructional materials, supplies and equipment to provide adequate programming. The program does not have the updated (functioning hardware and relevant, meaningful software) assistive technology necessary to meet the needs of students and staff. There is no Internet access available to students and staff at the storefront location. This would greatly help extend the curriculum offerings and provide enrichment opportunities. An email system would provide a quick and efficient system for communication with parents and among staff.

CFR300.347(a)(4) EXTENT OF PARTICIPATION WITH NON-DISABLED PEERS

There is no evidence that students enrolled in both sections of the Neurobehavioral Program are provided learning and social opportunities with typical peers.

Ed. 1119.06 FACILITIES AND LOCATION

The facility presently used by the older students in the Neurobehavioral Program is in poor condition, requiring improved overall maintenance, air quality, lighting and general climate improvement.

Program: Neurobehavioral Program, Continued

Ed. 1119.07 QUALIFICATIONS OF SERVICE PROVIDERS

The Neurobehavioral Program staff do not presently hold all NH certifications appropriate for the educational disability(ies) served. The program does not presently provide related services to this population of significantly disabled students (speech/language; occupational therapy; physical therapy). Of significance is the need for a full time speech/language pathologist or therapist to provide comprehensive and effective support to the entire Neurobehavioral student population (both younger and older populations). The program also lacks regular consultation with individuals certified in the areas not presently represented (ie. art, library/media/ music/ content areas for high school age students of english, math, science and social studies).

SUGGESTIONS:

- Create a consistent system of communication between programs. Staff presently feel disconnected with each other. Regularly scheduled staff meetings with topics identified in advance of the meeting would be greatly beneficial. A clear system of communication among all staff via Internet access, and voice mail would be very helpful.
- Provide regular and relevant professional development trainings for all staff so that information, behavior management, therapeutic knowledge and instructional practice is based on sound and current best practice in the field today.
- Encourage staff to visit other similar education. programs (private and public school) to observe a variety of instruction and related therapies.

ADDENDUM

JAMES O. MONITORING PROGRAM

SPAULDING YOUTH CENTER

Student File Review

Case Study Document

Reimbursement Claim Form

Case Study Addendum Form

**ADDENDUM
JAMES O. MONITORING PROGRAM**

SPAULDING YOUTH CENTER

PROGRAM: Pangburn School, ED Program

CITATIONS:

Ed. 1107.06(a) EVALUATION SUMMARY

There was no evidence of student evaluation summary.

Ed. 1107.07(c) EVALUATION TEAM

Unable to determine participants of the evaluation team meeting.

Ed. 1109.01 IEP COMPONENTS

IEP's did not include: expectations of student participation in regular class; a statement of parties assuming financial responsibility; and a statement regarding transition services that are not needed.

Ed. 1109.04

CFR300.504 PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS

Parents not provided with procedural safeguards at each notice of IEP meeting.

Ed. 1109.07

Ed. 1133.05(e)(k) PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS/IMPLEMENTATION OF IEP

Student not receiving occupational therapy services stipulated on present IEP. Each private facility shall implement all components of each student's IEP providing all special education and educationally related services in the amount and for the duration so specified in the IEP. Duly licensed or certified instruction, support and related services personnel shall be provided by each private facility.